

2011

19 April 2011

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The Honorable Cameron Smyth, Chair  
Assembly Local Government Committee  
California State Capitol, Rm 4098  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1265 (Nielsen) – Williamson Act As Amended – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Smyth:

On behalf of the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions, I write to express our support for AB 1265 by Assembly Member Nielsen. This bill would reinstate the Williamson Act alternative funding mechanism contained in SB 863 (Chapter 722, 2010).

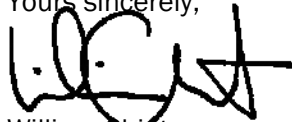
As you are aware, SB 80 (Chapter 11, 2011), the general government budget trailer bill signed by the Governor on March 24th, struck SB 863 from statute and cut the \$10 million subvention appropriation from last year. However, Members from both sides of the aisle expressed support for SB 863 and their desire to give counties this alternative funding approach for the Williamson Act program. Unfortunately, the bill was not amended and the SB 863 alternative was eliminated from statute.

AB 1265 would reinstate the program, giving counties the option to implement a critical alternative funding mechanism for the Williamson Act, absent significant subvention funding from the state. This alternative was the product of negotiations between local government, environmental and agricultural groups as a means to provide some type of interim funding for the program while looking towards long-term solutions.

Since 1963 Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCo) have worked within each county to meet its legislative mandate of balancing growth and development with discouraging sprawl and protecting California's important agricultural lands. The Williamson Act has proven an effective tool for many LAFCos to reduce sprawl and protect prime agricultural lands. The ramifications of eliminating State subventions and not providing an alternative funding mechanism cause us great concern. Without financial incentives to maintain contracts we believe the ability of LAFCos to meet the Legislative intent to preserve agricultural and open-space lands will be compromised.

For these reasons, CALAFCO respectfully urges your support of the Williamson Act and requests your "Aye" vote on AB 1265 when it is heard in your committee.

Yours sincerely,



William Chiat,  
Executive Director

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c: Members and Consultant, Assembly Local Government Committee  
Members and Consultant, Assembly Agriculture Committee  
Minority Consultants  
The Honorable Jim Nielsen, California State Assembly